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CHARACTERS OF THE COURT

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CHARACTERS

OF THE

COURT.

A POEM.

WITH NOTES.

"Omne animi vitium tanto conspectius in se
"Crimen habet, quantò major, qui peccat, habetur."

JUVENAL.

Oxford:

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1816.

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" Could Laureat Dryden pimp and friar engage,
" Yet neither Charles nor James be in a rage;
" And I not strip the gilding off a knave,
" Unplaced—unpensioned—no man's heir or slave."

POPE.

" Are there no sins for satire's bard to greet?
" Stalks not gigantic vice in every street?
" Shall Peers and Princes tread pollution's path,
" And 'scape alike the law's and muse's wrath?"

BYRON.

CHARACTERS OF THE COURT.

IN these our days, when vice and folly reign,
When crimes flagitious are no more a stain;
When wealthy knaves, and titled villains rise,
By the same arts, for which the poor man dies.
When men of taste, who ne'er had taste before,
Are ruined by their books, and not their w——;
And a black-lettered mania succeeds
To joys the turf affords, and generous steeds.
When each young Lordling launching on the town,
A Quarto* publishes, and gains renown;

* Thus Lord George G—nv—le, Lord D—ll—n, &c. &c.; who have all, as they respectively arrived at the age, I will not say of

What though his works to pastry-cooks descend,
Or serve to light the Miser's candle-end;
Yet if marked "scarce" in catalogues they're found,
Bl—df—d* will have them in morocco bound.
In such mad times, when folly seizes all,
And Prince and Peer alike for satire call;
What Poet, void of spleen, can e'er refrain
To re-assert neglected virtue's reign.

discretion, but of manhood, bestowed on the world their lucubrations.—We may hope some ages hence, from the great consumption of waste paper by pastry cooks, trunk-makers, and other honest artisans, their volumes may become rare, and therefore valuable. Till that period arrives, both Portugal and Ælian will rest uncut, and consequently unread, on the Booksellers' shelves, unless the taste of the world alters materially for the worse; which heaven forefend!!!

* Vide this noble Lord's collection; where the dullest works of the dullest Authors (provided they are scarce) are to be found; not "cased in congenial calf," as Lord Byron recommends, but in the most gorgeous morocco coverings.—It is impossible to apply the lines of Pope, on the library of the Duke of Chandos, more appropriately, than to that of this noble Personage:—

"His study, with what Authors is it stored?
"In *Books*, not *Authors*, curious is my Lord."

But where commence?—approach not near the
throne,
Nor tread the ground, the Laureat treads alone:
But prostrate dread the law with thunder big,
And fear th' Attorney-General's awful wig.

Shall then a subject 'scape, because he bears
A sounding title, or an office shares?
Shall, if like Ab—rd—n's * 'tis always worn,
A Ribbon silence then the public scorn?
No—if I perish in the glorious cause,
Each knave shall feel the weight of satire's laws.

Hail ********, hail, the ———'s humble friend,
To you, as first in favour, first I bend;

* It has been reported, but I know not with what truth, that this noble Lord was seen, on a certain occasion, divested of his usual accompaniment of the Star and Ribbon of the Thistle.—From the noble Diplomat's known attachment to his order, this anecdote may be doubted; and indeed I should be sorry to calumniate him so far, as to assert it as a fact, I only mention it as an extraordinary rumour.

But not with flattery, such as courts may give;
It is by truth that satire's bard would live.
What though in shameless infamy grown old,
Both fame and character for power you've sold!
What though an injured nation's scorn you bear,
And muttered hatred wounds your trembling ear;
Though curses every where your footsteps greet,
And hisses urge you on from street to street;
Still at a venal court you keep your place,
And gain new honours from each new disgrace;
Still with unblushing front you dare your fate,
And rise the higher from the nation's hate.
Hail, wond'rous man, what can you wish for more,
Your son a blackguard, and your wife a w——.
To you in vain* by Providence was given,
Rank—honour—wealth—each blessing under heaven:

* It is perhaps one of the most extraordinary circumstances of the age in which we live, that a man, noble by birth, and blest by fortune with all the advantages of this world, should have placed himself on a level with the lowest of mankind, and have acted as a pander in the intrigues of his wife.

Your native meanness broke through each disguise,
And scorned the petty rules which mortals prize.
From vicious* youth to unrespected age,
What servile adulation mark'd each stage.
O may your memory live in future time,
And show to men the dire effects of crime;
In history's page your name shall stand alone,
Equalled by no one, but your worthless son!

Hail, Son, hail whiskered ********, born to grace
Thy father's house, and high exalted race;
Of Stock-jobbers the first—and justly known,
By winning other's cash, to save your own:
The nightly plunderer of the youthful heir;
Forerunner true of evil and despair:

* This noble Personage has continued through the whole of his long life, to merit in the fullest manner, the lines bestowed upon him in the "Diaboliad," a poem now almost forgotten:—

"Without one virtue, that can grace a name;
"Without one vice, that ever leads to fame;
"The despicable ——— next appears,
"His bosom trembling with its usual fears."

In all the various arts of ruin tried,
The Jobber's glory—and the Gamester's pride.
Tho' Lord of thousands—grasping still for more,
And 'midst increasing riches, truly poor;
In you, united, every vice * we see,
And wonder how their varied ends agree.

As ********'s colleague, let me ******* name,
The same his talents, his pursuits the same—
Whether to C—lt—n H—se his steps he bend,
The ——'s flatterer, and obsequious friend.
Or on the turf displays his different skill,
Expert to rear—but more expert *to kill.*†

* Whether we look at Lord ******** in the character of a son—a husband—a father, or a friend, we shall find him equally despicable:—as a son, the disgrace of his family—as a husband, the deserter of his wife—as a father, neglectful of his children—and as a friend, the pernicious adviser of his Sovereign.—His character, indeed, seems to be the common centre of all vice and profligacy.

† It was, perhaps, fortunate for this titled Gamester, that the unhappy man, who was immolated as a victim to the vengeance of the law, for the poisoning of the horses at Newmarket, possessed so eminently the gifts of taciturnity and secresy.

If such, great Lord, in youth your daring deed,
As years encrease, still may your arts succeed;
Continue still your Sovereign's* steps to tread,
A halter's glories circling round your head;
Till when at last declines your setting sun,
The gibbet closes what the turf begun.

Shall worn-out ********** pass unnotic'd here,
To lawyers still, and once to strumpets dear—
His mighty mind no shame has e'er opprest,
No sense of honour ever warm'd his breast;
From youth to age, his calculating soul
No love, save that of lucre, could controul;
He always follows, where his interest leads;
Nor minds the means†, provided he succeeds.

* It is impossible for Lord ******* to take a better model for his conduct at Newmarket, than that of his r—y—l master; and by so doing, it is most devoutly to be wished, he may meet with a like reward.

† "Get place and wealth, if possible with grace;
"If not—by any means get wealth and place,"
Says Pope, and most religiously has this noble Lord followed the maxim.

Money he seeks, however mean the task,
And pays informers, though they come *en masque.**
********** all hail! great master of the law,
In every will prepared to find a flaw;
To ground on error many a specious claim,
And gain in Chancery Courts a damning fame.
What though no more the Pharoah bank† you keep,
No more with dexterous skill the table sweep;
Though fixed disease has made your fame its prey,
And Satan almost bears his prize away;
True to your life, consistent in your end,
To rob the helpless still your arts extend.

* It has been confidently reported that Lord ********** received the first intelligence of the error in the will of Lord Orf—rd, on which he has grounded his claim to Lord Clint—on's estate, from a wretch, who came to him in a mask; and who, for this piece of villainy, is to receive a certain portion of the noble Lord's gains.

† Lord **********, as it is well-known, began life a distressed man. By various means, some of them, perhaps, not quite consistent with the honour and dignity of a British Peer, he has acquired a princely fortune; but not yet content, he still grasps for more:—"Crescit amor nummi, quantum ipsa pecunia crescit."

Your frauds—your varied villainies remain ;
No fear of death subdues the love of gain.
The catalogue of crimes prepared to swell,
As injured Cl—nt—n* knows, alas, too well.
By every wise, by every good man scorned,
With no redeeming virtue e'er adorned.
********** farewell—be this your well-earned lot,
Through life detested, and in death forgot.

To sing of Courts, unworthy were the muse
That could at ********'s† name a line refuse:
The "*Massy Marquis,*" he whose tainted fame
Excites in every breast contempt and shame :

* The whole of this transaction, in which the conduct of the noble E—rl has been as disgraceful as that of the other plaintiff has been honourable, is so well known to the world, that I will not dilate upon it. It has completed that degradation of character, at which this Nobleman has been aiming during his whole life, and rendered him in every way contemptible.

† This Lord is so insignificant in every way, that he would not have been mentioned here, had not the intention of this poem been to "make bad men better, or at least ashamed!"

A ruined Lord—a worn-out debauchee,
In whom the last remains of vice we see;
Of health and fortune both alike bereft,
The power to sin—but not the wish has left.
But happy still, since even on the throne
He finds a soul congenial* to his own;
And though by all avoided and despised,
Still by the R——t are his merits prized.
And happier far, since yet he finds a friend
Prepared his favorite vices to defend;
Who from the bench, with courtly learning fraught,
Declares adultery "a venial† fault;"
Dares from disgrace each profligate‡ to save,
The censures of the world resolved to brave:

* The old proverb of "Like master, like man" is very applicable in the present instance. The points of similitude between this *par nobile fratrum*, are so obvious, that the reader shall be left to form his own comparison.

† Vide the C—— J——'s charge on the trial of the two Hunts, editors of the Examiner.

‡ The noble J——'s excessive leniency to offenders in love, of

With many an oath * perverts the ancient law,
Far other judge than England ever saw.

For some low office sure by fate designed,
And gifted with a vulgar grovelling mind;
But cast by chance on Princes to attend,
And doomed to act the base obsequious friend.
A flatterer mean, with petty cunning fraught;
Vicious in act, and profligate in thought;
Next in the list of Courtiers **** behold,
Proud of his rank, yet prouder of his gold;
Who strives by various means his end to gain;
He seeks a Peerage—but he seeks in vain.

all descriptions, is not to be wondered at, as it is well known that in his youth—

"A gallant free,
"A lusty reveller was he!"

* This noble Lord's constant custom of blaspheming is well known. He is the solitary instance of an individual, who in the upper House of Parliament, has ventured to decorate his orations with those varied expletives and effusions of speech, which are generally confined to the precincts of Billingsgate.

Though ruler now of many a distant clime,
Yet beggared † ***** shall receive a line:
For who than he, in former days more prone,
To bend the knee before the R——'s throne;
To change his course with every varying gale,
And hear unmoved the needy patriot rail.
To him, devoid of money, fortune gave,
To press with iron gripe, the I——n slave; *
To wage 'gainst Asia's Princes useless wars,
And deathless honour gain, devoid of scars;

† "He left behind him neither an house, nor an acre of land, by which to be remembered," says Clarendon, when speaking of the Earl of Carlisle; and it may very truly be applied to the Earl of *****.

* The fatal effects of that infamous job, which sent "that poor wretch *****" (as his Royal Master was wont to call him) to India, may one day be felt by this country very severely.

A man, who was not competent to take care of himself, was certainly not the properest person to take care of many millions of turbulent souls, who are kept subject to this country by very slender, and very artificial means.

And cleanse of former acts the Ethiop stain,
When loss of character was found a gain.*
What though by slow degrees our power decay,
Lost by his acts, or injured by his sway;
Yet if his ruined fortune he repair,
And leave a mighty plunder to his heir;
The end is answered of his eastern reign,
And no one sure has reason to complain.

But hold, methinks I hear the reader say,
Why this abuse? your heedless anger stay,
Nor dare attack the faults of rank and wealth;
Or if you do it—let it be by stealth.
Old H——d to be sure is rather mean,
But why should this offend your muse's spleen?

* This noble Lord's transaction with one Edm—ds, a Surgeon, of which an account was published in the *Book*, and where the fair fame of the descendant of the Plantagenets was rather roughly handled by the Son of Esculapius, is supposed to have had something to do with the appointment he now holds in I——a.

Y———h has faults, and L———r too a few,
But why consider bad reports as true?
Ch———ly loves play, as all have known long since,
But then he is L—d St——d to the Prince;
And F—e and H———t both are mighty Peers,
So be more prudent, and consult your fears:
You aim too high—to humble scenes retire,
To lash the great no poet should aspire.

Fain, gentle reader, would I change my strain,
Nor leave the courtier reason to complain;
The scourge of satire I would fain resign,
And turn to panegyric every line:
In gentle numbers eulogize the great,
How good by nature, and how blest by fate.
But for example's * sake I follow truth,
Though rough my numbers, and my verse uncouth;

* This poem has been written entirely for the sake of example, and not from any private pique.—I may truly say of the noble persons mentioned in it (as Achilles does in the Iliad),

"The distant Trojans never injured me."

To bare each villain to the face of day,
And probe his fame by satire's * piercing ray;
And teach the humbler crowd with care to shun
The crimes the rich commit—and are undone;
Such is my aim, nor think my verse too bold,
Whilst I the manners of a court unfold.

Enough—of fools and knaves a plenteous store
Remains behind—but I can sing no more:
Each knave †, each fool so tallies with his brother,
That half the household just reflects the other.

But were there one of rank above the rest,
In form—in manner—and in mind the best;
Graceful in mein, by nature formed to please,
Each word melodious, and each motion ease:

* Be it remembered that many,

"Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne,
"Are touched and shamed by ridicule alone."

† "Grove nods at grove, each alley has a brother,
"And half the platform just reflects the other."——Pope.

In youth, his soul with spotless honour graced,
Adorned with genuine feeling, wit, and taste;
In youth by all admired, by all approved,
Praised by the Sage, and by the Statesman loved.
His public virtue won a nation's voice;
His early promise made the land rejoice;
And Seers prophetic, hailed for after time
The friend to virtue, and the foe to crime.
But chief, Hibernia, be not this forgot,
He strove with promise fair to sooth thy lot;
To check the tyranny of lawless power,
And give thy tortured land a happier hour.
Thy wretched people saw the approaching day,
And hailed the rising Sun's benignant ray;
And hoped, and vainly * hoped, their feuds would cease,
While a new era brought returning peace.
Since such their hopes, their wishes, and their prayers,
Say—how rewarded were their anxious cares?

* The Irish Catholics may now say from experience,—"O put not your trust in *Princes*, nor in any child of man, for there is no help in them."

They saw their wishes scorned—their hopes destroyed.
Each pledge * neglected, and each promise void.
They saw a perjured ****** desert their cause,
Unmoved by nature's, or by honour's laws:
They saw—O actions of a r—y—l life!
His friends † deserted—and abused his wife ‡—
So fell the early promise of his reign,
So died his fame, defiled by many a stain.
And he, in former days to F—x allied,
Now sinks to Y———th for his friend and guide;
And Gr—nv—le's friendship, ere he changed his life,
Descends to H—df—t, or perhaps to F—fe.
Misguided man—who, but must inly mourn,
His character so changed, defaced, and torn.

* When the Duke of B—df—d went to Ireland, as Lord Lieutenant, a verbal, if not a written pledge was given him by the ******, of his, the ******'s, intention of affording relief to the Catholics of that country, whenever he should have an opportunity of so doing.

† Vide his transactions with the opp—s—t—n.

‡ Vide the *Book*.

No more the people's idol, and their choice;
No more the theme of every public voice;
No more his actions cause the loud acclaim
Of public praise to venerate his name:
Ceased all respect and love—and in their place
Disgust* and hate appear in every face;
And angry murmurs teach the royal ear,
E'en in a Palace† walls to taste of fear;
And to his trembling breast this maxim shew—
"Virtue alone is happiness below."

* As was plainly shewn a short time ago, by the treatment this great personage received, or was very near receiving, on his way from C———n to B————m House.

† The disapprobation expressed by the large body of people who accompanied the address of the City of London to the P——ss of W——, on passing C——n H——se, excited so much terror in the mind of its r—l possessor, that a detachment of cavalry was on that day placed in the front court of the Palace.

THE END

ERRATUM

Page 22, line 15, for *and* vainly, read, *ah!* vainly.

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